

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for invoking an application to process a multimedia resource
 2 specified by a Uniform Resource Locator (URL), the method comprising:
 3 mapping a set of keys on a user device to a set of URLs;
 4 detecting activation of a particular mapped key;
 5 retrieving a URL associated with the activated mapped key; and
 6 invoking an application to process the media resource specified by the
 7 retrieved URL.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the retrieved URL is a resource on a
 2 server designated to process requests generated in response to activation of any one of the
 3 mapped keys.

1 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 2 accessing a particular Web page having a link for a setup program;
 3 downloading the setup program onto the user device; and
 4 executing the setup program to assist with the mapping of the set of keys.

1 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 2 obtaining demographic data for a user of the user device.

1 5. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
 2 generating a unique identification code for the user.

1 6. The method of claim 5, wherein the unique identification code is
 2 generated based on the supplied demographic data for the user.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the unique identification code is
 2 further generated based on a pseudo-random number.

1 8. The method of claim 5, wherein the directing the Web page includes

2 generating an application invocation request, using the HTTP protocol, for
 3 the activated mapped key, wherein the request includes the URL associated with the
 4 activated mapped key and the unique identification code.

1 9. The method of claim 8, further comprising:
 2 sending the HTTP request to a server designated by the URL

1 10. The method of claim 8, further comprising:
 2 processing the request local to the client system.

1 11. The method of claim 8, wherein the HTTP request further includes an
 2 identifier for the activated mapped key.

1 12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 2 receiving a first indication to disable the set of mapped keys; and
 3 disabling the set of mapped keys in response to the received first
 4 indication.

1 13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
 2 receiving a second indication to enable the set of mapped keys; and
 3 enabling the set of mapped keys in response to the received second
 4 indication.

1 14. The method of claim 1, wherein the set of mapped keys are selected
 2 from a set of functional (F) keys available on a computer keyboard.

1 15. A method for mapping a set of keys on a user device to a set of
 2 Uniform Resource Locators (URLs), the method comprising:
 3 associating each key in a first set of keys with a respective set of one or
 4 more URLs; and
 5 for each of one or more keys in the first set,
 6 receiving a selection for a particular URL in the associated set of
 7 URLs, and
 8 mapping the key to the selected URL.

1 16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 associating each key in a second set of one or more keys with a respective
3 URL.

1 17. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 associating each key in a third set of one or more keys with an unrestricted
3 URL; and
4 for each of one or more keys in the third set,
5 receiving an entry for a particular URL, and
6 mapping the key to the entered URL.

1 18. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 storing the URL for each mapped key to a storage unit.

1 19. A method for processing HTTP requests at a first server, the method
2 comprising:
3 receiving an HTTP request from a user device, wherein the request
4 includes a unique identification code and an identifier for a particular key activated to
5 generate the request;
6 determining a multimedia resource location for the activated key; and
7 directing the received request to the determined resource address for the
8 activated key.

1 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the resource address for the
2 activated key is determined based on the unique identification code and the identity of the
3 activated key.

1 21. The method of claim 19, wherein the resource address for the
2 activated key is retrieved from a database used to store resource addresses for unique
3 identification codes and keys.

1 22. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
2 collecting demographic information associated with the received request.

1 23. The method of claim 22, wherein the demographic information is
2 encapsulated within the unique identification code.

1 24. The method of claim 22, further comprising:
2 collecting descriptive information associated with the received request.

1 25. The method of claim 24, wherein the descriptive information includes
2 a particular time of day the request was received.

1 26. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
2 initiating a setup program if the unique identification code or identity of
3 the activated key is unrecognized.

1 27. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
2 determining a load at the first server; and
3 directing the received request to a second server if the load at the server is
4 above a particular threshold.

1 28. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
2 identifying the number of servers available to process requests;
3 computing a code for the received request; and
4 directing the received request to one of the available servers based on the
5 computed code.

1 29. The method of claim 28, wherein the computed code is based on at
2 least a portion of the unique identification code included in the received request.

1 30. A computer program product for directing an application to a Uniform
2 Resource Locator (URL), comprising:
3 code that maps a set of keys on a user device to a set of URLs;
4 code that detects activation of a particular mapped key;
5 code that retrieves a URL associated with the activated mapped key;

6 code that directs the application to the retrieved URL, wherein the
7 application is a Web browser or a multimedia player; and
8 a data storage medium operative to store the codes.

1 31. A server operative to process HTTP requests and comprising:
2 a data storage medium configured to store a handler module operable to
3 receive a request from a user device, wherein the request includes a
4 unique identification code and an identifier for a particular key activated to
5 generate the request,
6 determine a multimedia resource address for the activated key, and
7 direct the received request to the determined resource address for
8 the activated key; and
9 at least one processor operatively coupled to the data storage medium and
10 configured to execute the one or more modules stored therein.

1 32. The computer program of claim 31, wherein the data storage medium
2 is further configured to store a data mining module operable to
3 collect demographic information associated with the received request,
4 collect information relating to a particular time of day the request was
5 received, and
6 collect an identity of the particular key activated to generate the received
7 request.

1 33. The computer program of claim 31, wherein the data storage medium
2 is further configured to store a load balancing module operable to
3 identify the number of servers available to process requests,
4 compute a code for the received request, and
5 direct the received request to one of the available servers based on the
6 computed code.